



A Housing Symposium Affordable Housing for Albertans

Final Report

1. Introduction

The Housing Symposium was held in Edmonton June 15 and 16, 1998 to address the pressing need for more affordable housing for families, senior citizens and Albertans with special needs. The primary goal of the symposium was to create an opportunity for participants to share ideas and solutions which could be used to guide the development of Alberta Municipal Affairs' 1999 Business Plan.

About 550 people from the business community, the home building industry, the non-profit sector, housing and support service providers, government departments, the municipal government sector, health authorities, and the general public from across the province responded to the Honourable Iris Evans' invitation and attended the two-day symposium. All Albertans who were concerned about housing issues and willing to contribute ideas were invited to participate. To help make this possible, no registration fee was charged (Minister Evans suggested that participants donate their registration savings or an equivalent amount in time to a favourite charity in their community). Indeed, it was regrettable that some late registrants could not be accommodated because the meeting facility had reached capacity.

Discussions at the symposium were organized into four streams (low income households, modest income households, seniors and persons with special needs) in recognition of the unique characteristics of households within these streams and the different solutions which may be required. To facilitate discussions and maintain focus, each stream was assigned a facilitator and six panel speakers. The facilitators and panelists were chosen based on their knowledge, experience, and interest in their field. The idea was to ensure that each group would have sufficient expertise in the following areas: policy, finance/investment, land use, technical design, legal/administration/organization, and government (elected officials). Based on results from the round table groups, the panelists did an excellent job in stimulating discussion, as the volume and quality of information and ideas generated was exceptional.

The next section of this report summarizes the process Alberta Municipal Affairs used to pull all the ideas together and present them in a format that is digestible and comprehensible. An enormous number of ideas and suggestions were generated as a result of the symposium. Despite the large volume of information, effort was made to include every idea and issue that was raised, including *Post-it* notes ideas,

responses from the four “What We Heard” discussions papers that were sent out prior to the symposium and letters received after the symposium. These ideas are summarized as they were worded in a series of tables included in the “Findings” section.

The Housing Symposium was only the beginning of a process intended to establish community-based partnerships which will assure that all Albertans have access to safe, suitable and affordable housing. In the last section we will outline the steps Alberta Municipal Affairs has taken since the symposium, our plans for future action and ways that you can participate.

Lastly, additional information from the symposium has been provided in the following appendices:

Appendix A - Keynote Address by June Callwood

Appendix B - Plenary Session Presentations by Larry Anderson and Doug Kelly

Appendix C - Panelist Notes

Appendix D - Summary of Evaluations